

Connecticut Commerce Committee,

Please take a step in the right direction and vote No to HB5263. Rabbits are not classed with other livestock in the United States and therefore do not require inspection under the Federal Meat Inspection Act or the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. **Due to lack of inspection meat rabbits often live in stressful filthy conditions and are full disease and parasites.**

The Cruelty - Meat rabbits are the same breed or species as pet rabbits, and not covered by either the protections that govern the treatment of animals used for meat or the protections that govern the treatment of rabbits as pets or companion animals. **In the United States, rabbits, like poultry, are exempt from the Humane Slaughter Act. Among other things, this means rabbits may be fully conscious while being slaughtered.** The rabbits do not need to be stunned before slaughter and an inspector is not required to be present leaving them vulnerable to the worst kind of abuse as seen in widely documented inhumane treatment and animal abuse.

RHDV2 Virus - (STATEWIDE) highly contagious disease.

Connecticut State Veterinarian, Dr. Jane Lewis, has announced that an experimental vaccine for Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV) has been approved for use by Connecticut licensed veterinarians. **RHDV2 is highly contagious and, unlike other rabbit hemorrhagic disease viruses, it affects both domestic and wild rabbits,** including hares, jackrabbits, and cottontails. The New England cottontail, eastern cottontail, and snowshoe hare, which are found in Connecticut, are susceptible to infection and mortality.

Environmental Impact - Although rabbit meat is less harmful to the environment than beef, it still has a significant climate impact. **Despite being considered the most sustainable meat, its carbon emissions per kilogram of protein are thought to be higher than both pork and chicken.**

Just 212 grams of rabbit meat can produce as much as one kilogram of greenhouse gases. This, for example, makes it almost five times as polluting as lentils, rabbits also produce a high concentration of ammonia, which causes poor air quality.

The shy, quiet and gentle nature of these animals makes them easy to exploit. But behind closed doors, rabbits are suffering immensely at the hands of those who see them as mere units of production. **Rabbits are fragile animals and intensive farming of the species has a high mortality rate, although they are often slaughtered as young as eight to twelve weeks old, as many as 15 to 30 percent die before even reaching this age. This is largely due to poor health, commonly respiratory and intestinal diseases.** The wire mesh flooring of cages can cut into a rabbit's paws a painful infection that leads to abscesses and bone infection.

In 2015, investigators from animal protection charity Last Chance for Animals went undercover at a Pel Freez processing plant in Arkansas, the largest rabbit slaughterhouse in America. The workers did attempt to stun them with the dull edge of a knife but many of the rabbits remained conscious. Their legs were then broken, and they began to scream. Finally, shackled upside down, their heads were cut off. This was prolonged by the use of a blunt knife, many rabbits undergo vicious sawing and hacking, drawing out their already barbaric end. Rabbits are

normally silent creatures; it takes a lot for them to cry out. Their final screams indicate they are experiencing extreme pain.

Nothing about farming domestic rabbits for food is humane, safe or environmentally good. Enough animals are already killed for human consumption, please consider taking a moral stand.

**Linda Malie
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